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Dear Friends,

**A New Season in
the Life of the Southeast Conference**

Throughout this newsletter you are seeing articles about churches that are seeking to **Renew, to Grow, to Respond** to the line from the old hymn, "New occasions teach new duties". The conference is eager to partner with churches that are looking to their future, and seeking resources to do so creatively.

Here are some of the ways the SEC can engage with your church:

1. **Two loan programs available:** The United Church of Christ has two loan programs available, one designed for new and newly affiliated churches, the Church Building and Loan Fund, and the other intended for churches, which have been a part of the United Church of Christ, the Cornerstone Fund. Churches across the Southeast Conference have taken advantage of both these funds to undertake renovations and improvements to their facilities. If you are interested in learning more, you can contact me in the conference office.
2. **Commitment to strengthening:** We are committed to the strengthening of the financial life and stewardship responses of our local churches. Debbie Spearman's job has been revised from working exclusively with the follow up to the Transforming Churches Transforming Lives campaign to working in a broad area of financial development in the local church. Debbie is gathering resources from the national UCC, and beginning to reach out to churches to assess their needs, and develop plans for a response.
3. **Support in moving:** A number of our churches have approached us asking for support as they consider moving in new directions and reaching new people. Working with the Center for Progressive Renewal, we have prepared proposals for intensive engagement with churches around renewal and revisioning.
4. **Online leadership training:** With the launch of PATHWAYS, we will provide online leadership training for both lay leaders and those preparing for authorized ministry, either as ordained or licensed ministers. This program is being undertaken in collaboration with Lancaster Theological Seminary, and with the support of the Center for Progressive Renewal.
5. **Development of proposals:** Some of our congregations have developed proposals to renew aspects of their ministries, which have been funded by the national church. The conference office is available to assist in developing those

**UCC News****UCC Newsroom**

Headlines from the United Church of Christ

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proposals.

This is truly a ***New Season in the life of the Southeast Conference***, and for that matter across the United Church of Christ. We invite you to being in touch with us to explore ways in which your church can look to its future creatively and strategically.

Contact me directly if you have any questions on the information listed above.

Peace,

Tim Downs

Timothy C. Downs

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At its fall meeting, the Georgia South Carolina Association voted to receive **Kirkwood United Church of Christ** as a congregation in full standing in the UCC. The church shared the story of their journey from their beginnings in a coffee shop through a number of different settings for worship to the present location in downtown Kirkwood. The church led by Susannah Davis currently has a worshipping congregation of 60-70 each week, and continues to grow. They are the proud supporters of nine members in discernment preparing for ordination in the UCC. Kirkwood UCC invites all of the churches of the association, their members and clergy to a service of reception into the United Church of Christ on November 20th at 5:00 pm. We will be welcoming Ben Guess the newly elected Executive Minister of Local Church Ministries of the UCC as our preacher. Following the service there will be a community wide dinner for all.

Midway Congregational UCC, Midway, GA, is embarking on an innovative community ministry, under the leadership of their new pastor, Larry Evans. Wanting to serve and strengthen the families of Liberty County, the church is opening a Center for Families and Wellness. Rev. Evans is a licensed therapist and is working in collaboration with agencies in the area to staff and equip the Center.

Holy Trinity United Church of Christ, Nashville TN celebrated their 15th year anniversary in October. [Follow this link](#) to the local Tennessee paper to read more about Holy Trinity and its celebration.

Safe Harbor Family Church has its roots in one of the strongest loops in the Bible Belt. Its members see this church community as a true sanctuary. [Link here to read](#) what was written in the local paper.

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Chris Graham, pastor of Church of the Savior, Roswell, continues his struggle with ALS. While his prognosis remains uncertain, he is able to attend church and preach on occasions with warmth and eloquence. We invite you to hold Chris, his wife Carol, and their family in your prayers.

We received word that **Susie Smith**, pastor of Peace Congregational UCC, Clemson, is out of the hospital and recuperating at home. She will continue her recovery until January. Steve Stern, a retired UCC minister and member of the church is supplying the pulpit for the month of November. Jean Miller, a member in discernment and member of Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta, will be providing pastoral services and support throughout the month of December.

UCC News**UCC Newsroom**

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Feature Focus - November 2011



"Churches are Coming Alive!"

Transforming Churches Throughout the SEC -- by Tim Downs

Across the Southeast Conference, churches are coming alive! We know that the conference has had a successful strategy for new church development, but beyond that, we have churches that are expanding and renovating their facilities, to serve new and growing ministries. Here are the stories of four of these churches, all of whom have found support in loans from the UCC, as well as consultation with the conference the national setting of the UCC, and other resources. They have each undertaken a major expansion or improvement of their facilities to serve the changing needs for ministry around them.

The following churches are approaching their individual campaigns in a variety of ways.

First

Congregational
Church UCC

| Atlanta, GA

Holy Trinity Community Church UCC

| Nashville, TN

Pilgrimage United Church of Christ

| Marietta, GA

Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC

| Pleasant Hill, TN



Read on to reflect on recent building projects at various SEC churches. We hope that you enjoy reading their updates and viewing some of the photos included within their articles. We know there are other churches across the SEC that have also gone through building campaigns. We would love to hear from you and know your experiences and any words of wisdom that you would like to pass on to the rest of the conference. We will be following up on this article with various resources that may be of assistance for other churches who may be considering undertaking a building campaign. I am sure the pastors of the congregations listed below will welcome any questions you may have in beginning your own campaign.

■ First Congregational Church | Atlanta, GA

[View Article on Our Building Project](#) [By Bobbi Gruen Thomas, Committee](#)

Updates on Our Building Project -- By Belle Graves Thomas, Committee

Lusk & Company, the General Contractor, has finished the grading of the Memorial Garden behind the church building, and constructed the masonry seat wall that runs along Courtland Street and behind the Avis Building (*Fig. 1*). The grass in the Memorial Garden will be planted, later in the fall.

Bovard Studio was on-site yesterday to pick-up the Watts Stewardship stained glass window, and other windows for refurbishing in their studio in Iowa (*Fig. 2*). Bovard will return later in the fall to re-install the Watts Window, and repair the exposed stained glass windows in the Atrium.

The erection of the fourth and final, steel truss was inspected and approved. The installation of the IHVAC ductwork in the attic that hangs from the steel trusses has begun (*Fig. 3*). This ductwork will supply the air conditioning that will cool the renovated Sanctuary space.

Lusk poured the concrete steps and slab that connects to the new east entrance. Installation of the glass panels in the curtain wall at the east entrance will start soon.

- Rev. Dwight Andrews
Rev. Dwight Andrews , Pastor



■ Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC | Pleasant Hill, TN

Pleasant Hill UCC Renovation Almost Complete

-- By Rev. Tom Warren, Pastor

Beginning in January, the Pleasant Hill Community Church has been systematically dismantled, expanded, and rebuilt. Along with a completely renovated sanctuary, including additional seating for 100 more congregants, our building program has included the addition of an all-glass chancel area, chairs instead of pews, a state-of-the-art sound system, and new classroom, office space, and storage areas. Part of our renovation has included a geo-thermal heating and cooling system which is not only "green," but will in the future be very cost effective. Boyce Hall, our primary fellowship space has been expanded and will include an area for our library, Equal Exchange coffee sales, and third world crafts.

You can see why we are so excited as a congregation about moving into our enlarged facility.

Pleasant Hill Church Rebuild Pleasant Hill Church Rebuild

Outside the building we have incorporated a new church tower with the U.C.C. cross and orb rising from the top for all to see. Additionally, our Memorial Garden is being expanded and beautified, with doors leading to the garden directly from our sanctuary. We will now worship looking out upon Main Street in Pleasant Hill ("the world") while keeping our eye on the "saints" of the church in our memorial garden.

We anticipate moving into our new building early in November, with dedication ceremonies planned for the weekend of January 6, 7, and 8th of 2012. Come, you are all invited to this very special time in the life of our congregation.

- Rev. Tom Warren, Pastor

For more information, [please link here to read](#) an earlier article **Pleasant Hill Ground Breaking** published in the Conference Connection.

■ Holy Trinity Community Church, UCC | Nashville, TN

"Imagine ... a Hope and a Future" -- By Rev. Cynthia Andrews-Looper, Pastor

We are excited about our future at Holy Trinity



Community Church! During the month of October (2011), we are celebrating 15 years as an affirming congregation that believes deeply everyone is welcome. In 1995, Pastor Cindy and 25 others stepped out in faith, being obedient to God's calling, creating a church filled with the Holy Spirit. Over the course of our first 15 years, we have witnessed many changes with the most consistent change being growth.

Today, our church offers three worship services every Sunday to accommodate those wanting to join in fellowship to worship and honor God each week. We have approximately 300 souls touched by the Spirit weekly. The sermons are available on our web site for those who cannot make it to services. During the transition from one service to the next, our hallways are lined with brothers and sisters in Christ patiently waiting to honor God. We clearly need more space.

This space need led us to prayerful consideration and research about our options. After countless hours in prayer and meetings, reviewing new sites and existing buildings, the congregation voted to embark upon a Capital Campaign to add onto our existing building. "IMAGINE... A Hope and A Future" was officially launched

and the excitement for our future can be felt across the church.

With the expanded building, we can expand our existing ministries. We can open our arms to more who are lost and hurting and point them to their Healer. We can add new staff to assist with the growing needs of our



congregation. We can say "yes" to new ministries. We can house simultaneous seminars and fellowship opportunities without needing to transition rooms as a result of our current space limitations.

Stepping out in faith is often intimidating. But then, the Lord has shown us time and time again through the messages in His Word, if what He calls His faithful to do could be done by them alone, His glory would not be known. Looking back on the history of our church, seeing what He has done so far,

and sensing what is ahead, there is no doubt His glory will be known!

We are currently in the midst of our "Imagine ... a hope and a future" campaign.

We kicked off the public phase on October 20. It will run through the month of December. Our minimal goal is 1.9 million. Our mid range goal is 2.48 million and our challenge goal is 3.26 million. If we raise our mid range goal or above, we will be giving to the SEC campaign. We are very hopeful that we will hit our mid range goal and are praying that we will hit our challenge goal. Our plan is to build a new sanctuary that will seat at least 450 and expand the education and counseling space. The current sanctuary will be used for a fellowship hall, as well as other ministry needs like Room in the Inn, large meeting space, etc. This campaign is creating an amazing excitement among our congregation as we imagine all that God has for us in our future.

If you have the opportunity to join us, please do!
We'd love to meet you and worship with you!
God's favor and blessings upon you!

God's favor and blessings upon you.

- Rev. Cynthia Andrews-Looper Rev. Cynthia Andrews-Looper , Pastor

■ Pilgrimage United Church of Christ | Marietta, GA

Becoming a Stained Glass Church -- By Rev. Kimberleigh Buchanan, Pastor

In 2004, in the midst of the nation-wide UCC ad campaign, Pilgrimage began to experience significant growth. Our small space was quickly becoming too-crowded. We did two things in response. First, we started a second worship service. Second, we appointed a Task Force to study growth patterns of our church and the area, to project growth into the future, then to make a proposal for what to do in response to those projections.

After many months of work, we determined that we wanted to stay on our current property rather than move. Because our property is small—about 3 buildable acres—we engaged an architect to work with us and see whether we could build a new facility. After many more months of work, the architect told us there is space for new buildings and parking on our small spot of land. He proposed beginning our expansion by building a new worship space and additional parking.



Pilgrimage Rebuild Pilgrimage Rebuild

At that point, we undertook a feasibility study to see whether we had the financial resources to fund a \$2.7 million project. The feasibility study revealed that we were not yet ready to fund a project nearly ten times our church's annual budget. After 3 years of hard work, it was disappointing to realize we would not be able to build.

A few months later, at a fellowship meal in our worship/fellowship space, one of our members got up, began moving around the room and dreamed up a renovation. He imagined moving the classrooms that ran alongside the worship space out of the building, shifting the worship space 90 degrees creating a more horizontal than vertical seating arrangement, painting, installing new lighting, replacing our metal folding chairs with more comfortable seating, and removing a couple of walls.

He also put together a budget for the renovation—in the ball park of \$85,000. We also looked into renting a 4-classroom modular unit. Installation of the unit would cost \$6,000 or so and rental fees would run around \$500/month. With contingencies, it was looking like \$100,000 or so would do it. That even included

newly designed and installed stained glass windows. Sounds great, right?

[Link here to see a power point presentation](#) created to make proposal to church membership.

Then the fire marshall came to visit. From him we learned that putting a new modular unit on the property would require installing a new fire hydrant. Fire hydrants—and all the things that accompany them—we learned are quite expensive. Then there's the new drainage system and landscaping also required by the county. The total cost of our renovation quickly rose to \$250,000...at the time, about equal to our annual budget.

Despite many complications with the fire hydrant process, the renovation went smoothly. The renovation itself was completed in less than a year. Two and a half years into the three year funding process, we are well on our way to fully paying off the renovation this coming summer.

- Rev. Kimberleigh Buchanan [Rev. Kimberleigh Buchanan](#), Pastor

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UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST**

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SEC Conference News

Staff Plans for 2012

At a recent daylong planning event in October for the Southeast Conference staff, we looked ahead together at the program year 2012. Debbie Spearman is planning a strategic plan for financial development for local churches. Kathy Clark and Sarah Kim continue to work on the Global Theological Education event in Thailand, which will take place in January 2012. Further, they are launching the PATHWAYS program, with initial courses being offered this fall, and outreach to other conferences to recruit interest and participation. Perhaps of greatest interest and importance, the Annual Meeting of the Conference will take place on Saturday, June 9, hosted by First Congregational Christian UCC, Birmingham. Friday evening, June 8 there will be the TAP graduation banquet and commencement in Birmingham. The Annual Meeting Planning Committee will include Rodney Franklin and two members of First Church, Jim Crabb, Ginny Nixon, Susan Dunn, Tim Downs and one other.


**Southeast Conference
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST**


Southeast Conference Develops Partnership with Lancaster Theological Seminary

As a part of the growing partnership with Lancaster Theological Seminary (LTS), and the Southeast Conference working with them to develop PATHWAYS, continue collaborations with the Global Theological



Education program, and other engagements, Tim Downs has been elected to the Board of Trustees of the seminary. Tim has said, "the development of leadership for the changing United Church of Christ continues to be a challenge and priority for our conference. I hope that through this partnership, we, seminary and conference will be able to mutually support one another in our common task of training and equipping leaders".

Photos appearing to the right were taken at the recent meetings at LTS where Kathy Clark presented on PATHWAYS and Tim Downs was present for discussions.

[Link here to visit the website for Lancaster Theological Seminary.](#)



Alabama-Tennessee Association Fall Meeting - "Making Connections"

"Making Connections" was the theme of the Alabama-Tennessee Association Fall Meeting, which took place on September 30 and October 1. Hosted by Howard Congregational UCC in Nashville, the biannual gathering was a time of creative worship, interesting workshops, wonderful fellowship, and excellent preaching.



[Click for Slideshow!](#) [Click for Slideshow!](#)

Planned and led by the UCC seminarians from Vanderbilt Divinity School under the leadership of Cameron Barr, the intergenerational event made connections between our deep history and the church of the future. A highlight of the gathering was the ecclesiastical council for Member in Discernment Benjamin Robert Konecny, who was unanimously approved for ordination pending a call. On Friday evening, clergy from the Association met for an informal gathering to make and renew connections with one another. Many thanks go out to Moderator Gary Luther Myers, Pastor Christophe Ringer, COM Chair Barbara Everett, the members of Howard Congregational UCC, and the planning team for bringing us together as church.



Georgia-South Carolina Association Gathers for Fall Meeting

On Saturday, October 15, 60 members of the Georgia-South Carolina Association gathered in the newly renovated sanctuary of Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, to conduct business, worship, join in fellowship and celebrate. Cornelius Watts, moderator, opened the meeting by calling for an ecclesiastical council. The Council examined Laura Arnold for ordination, and unanimously approved her to proceed. Laura



preached a sermon inviting those gathered to transformation through creative non-violence. This action was particularly noteworthy because Laura is the first member in discernment to seek ordination through the new multiple paths to ministry. They then acted to received Kirkwood UCC as a congregation in full standing in the United Church of Christ. From its beginnings four years ago in a coffee shop, Kirkwood UCC has grown to 60 in worship, and been approved for a loan to purchase a building. The gathering then joined in worship, which music led by a combined choir of Kirkwood and Pilgrimage churches, and the children's' choir of Kirkwood. Communion was celebrated

Following lunch, the gathering came together for business, in which they elected Elizabeth Clement and Debbie Spearman as moderator and vice-moderator of the association respectively to begin in their offices following the spring annual meeting. Debbie Spearman gave an update on the status of the Transforming Churches, Transforming Lives Campaign. The event ended with a panel representing Virginia-Highland Church, Pilgrimage UCC, Circular Congregational UCC, and First Congregational UCC, Atlanta in a free wheel conversation about church as sacred space. The spirit of the meeting was warm and enthusiastic noting all the signs of renewal and vision that are taking root in the association.



East Alabama-West Georgia Association Gathers for 79th Annual Meeting and 111th Session of the Alabama Christian Council

Twenty people gathered on Saturday October 23 at Oak Grove Congregational Christian Church, UCC, and Pine Mountain, GA. In the roll call of churches, there were three churches present. Moderator Wayde Washburn opened with a reflection on the state of the association, noting that in the 1980's there were 35 churches in the association, and now there are four. He lifted up the noteworthy history of the association, and the "cloud of witnesses, and host of saints" that have been a part of building that history. Naming Roy Bain, Joe French,



Warren Blankenhorn, the Dollar family as those on whose shoulders we stand, Wayde challenged us to begin thinking of where we go from here. He noted that this is truly a time of transition, and we are called to live in these days faithfully and fully.

Tim Downs gave an annual financial report for the association. There is \$28,482.28 in the checking account, and a balance of \$104,861.23 in the United Church Foundation account for theological scholarships. This money came from the sale of First Congregational Church, Roanoke, AL. Downs then gave a report on the conference. He said that while the vitality and growth of the conference was not evident in this association, there is no doubt that the successes of today are built on the commitments that were made by those before us. Much of that growth is in urban areas across the South, and the

only urban area in this association is Columbus.

We then received reports from each of the churches present. United Columbus noted that they still have four members who meet in a Burger King when their pastor, Jim Johnson is in town. The church building which they have turned over to the Columbus Historic Foundation is being renovated. Oakgrove Congregational Christian Church is continuing to "rock and roll", although it is struggling with membership. It was reported in the words of Monty Python that Sandy Creek UCC, "ain't dead yet". Following additional report, elections were held and Wayde Washburn was reelected moderator, Ira David, elected vice-moderator, and Betty Moon will continue as secretary. The Association voted to dedicate \$3500 to staff support in the Conference.

The keynoter for the occasion was Mike Stroud, the director of the History Project. He traced the history of this association from the earliest days of James O'Kelly to W.M.J. elder who with his family established 22 churches on the banks of the Chattahoochee River, beginning in modest brush arbors. He noted with particular thanks the roles of Millard Fuller and Jimmy Lightbourne in bringing about the formation of the Southeast Conference over the objections of the segregationists at this time.



Capital Campaign Continues Growth

Twenty-one SEC Churches have now made their pledge to the Capital Campaign. Placing our new total at: **\$508,000**

[Link to list of current pledged churches.](#)

Living into the Future of Theological Education

October 8, Tim Downs Dorothea Lotze Kola and Kathy Clark led a daylong event, in Chattanooga, TN, for

advisors and prospective advisors for members in discernment. The purpose of the event was to make clear the role of advisor and what the Committees on Ministry ought to expect from them. It was a time of dynamic interaction, and high interest. At a meeting on November 12 in Atlanta, we will focus on details of the processes that will be open to all members in discernment, their advisers and prospective advisers.

A Breathtaking Blue Ridge Retreat

A Faith Inspired Look Toward Wholeness

On the beautifully, colorful fall weekend of Oct. 7-9, hundreds of women from the southern region joined together for a time of fun, fellowship, relaxation and spiritual encounter. This all took place at the United Church of Christ's Southern Regional Women's Retreat held at the UCC Conference Center in Blowing Rock, NC. We experienced together "A Faith Inspired Look Toward Wholeness" with UCC's Minister for Health Care Justice, Barbara Baylor, complete with many motivating and educational workshops,



2011 Women's Retreat! 2011

Women's Retreat!

mountain folklore, a silent auction and inspiring music. Women from the Southeast conference joined those from the Southern, Florida and South Central Conferences for this wonderful weekend together. Click on the slide show to the left to see the many smiling faces at this year's retreat.

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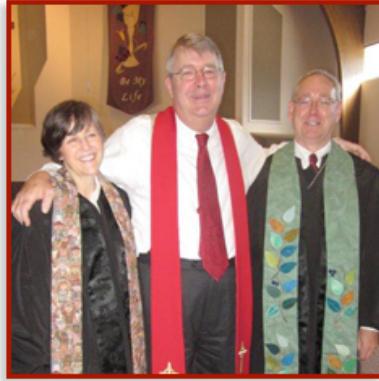
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Celebrations - November 2011



John and Rebecca Shillingburg, both recent graduates of Columbia Theological Seminary, members of Church of the Savior, Roswell, A Community of Faith of the United Church of Christ, were ordained in a service on October 16, at 2:00P.



Participating in the service were Tim Downs, Conference Minister, Allen Mullinax, Chair of the Georgia-South Carolina Association, and Tom Query and Elizabeth Clement, both supply ministers to Church of the Savior. Chris Graham, the pastor of Church of the Savior, preached for the occasion. John and Rebecca have been called to serve as co-pastors of Jefferson United Church of Christ, Jefferson, MD., in the Catoctin Association of the Central Atlantic Conference. They will begin their ministry there next month.

Laura Arnold, a member of Kirkwood United Church of Christ, and recent graduate of Candler School of Theology, preached to an ecclesiastical council of the Georgia-South Carolina Association on October 15 at the fall meeting of the association. She was unanimously approved as ordainable pending a call.

Bob MacFarlane, who has served for a year and a half as the interim minister at Circular Congregational UCC, Charleston, is preparing to end his ministry in Charleston to retire with his wife Diana to their home in Massachusetts. There will be a service celebrating his ministry in Charleston on November 20. Bob has served in ministry in the United Church of Christ for 40 years, in Michigan, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and South Carolina among other places. Under his interim leadership Circular Congregational UCC has taken in 35 new members, fully 10% of their membership, a testimony to Bob's welcoming and hospitable spirit.

Congratulations to **Cameron Trimble**, formerly Associate Conference Minister, and currently co-executive director of the Center for Progressive Renewal. She was installed as co-pastor of Virginia Highland Church (A Baptist and UCC Congregation) on October 16. Tim Downs participated in the service. She will serve with co-pastor Michael Piazza. Michael was installed at Virginia Highland Church earlier this summer.



Larry Evans was installed as pastor and teacher of the Midway Congregational UCC, Midway, GA, on October 9. Larry comes to this position after having taught pastoral care and counseling at Lancaster Theological Seminary for six years. He has previously served as a chaplain in the Army, and as pastor of Central Congregational UCC, New Orleans. Tim Downs preached for the occasion. and the church's previous pastor. Dick Woodward participated in the

service.

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EVENTS CALENDAR

November 2011						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

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